

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 209 664

CS 206 619

AUTHOR Kolczynski, Richard G.
 TITLE Elementary School Language Arts: A Basic Philosophy.
 PUB DATE [80]
 NOTE 7p.
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum; *Curriculum Development; *Educational Philosophy; Elementary Education; Guidelines; *Language Arts; *Student Centered Curriculum; Student Needs; Teacher Role; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

Following a statement of philosophy for developing an elementary school language arts curriculum, this paper presents a list of assumptions to serve as a guide to the many criteria that should influence educators' decision making as they plan language arts programs. The assumptions, developed by a committee of teachers and administrators from one public school district, include the following: (1) children have a right to their own language; (2) teachers should accept and use children's language patterns as springboards for instruction; (3) learning experiences should reflect sound principles of psychology and children's developmental characteristics; (4) teachers should recognize each child's best mode of learning and provide appropriate instruction and experiences; (5) learning occurs as the result of an interaction of previous experiences, subject matter, teaching methods, and materials; (6) the goal of instruction should be the development of creative and competent producers and consumers of language, which is best achieved through an emphasis on the creative arts of English; (7) the student should be an active participant in learning; (8) student centered approaches should be used whenever appropriate; and (9) evaluation should include a variety of procedures and should be based on the goals to be accomplished. (FL)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Elementary School Language Arts:

A Basic Philosophy

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

* This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

The development of language skills is an essential consideration and responsibility of all teachers regardless of the level of the subject being taught. Language is the carrier of learning and the key to understanding. The ability to use language with ease, clarity, and purpose is a primary goal of language instruction. The focus of the teaching-learning process, therefore, is upon active experiences in manipulating, interpreting, and creating language.

Acquisition of language skills is fostered in a climate where children have the freedom, encouragement and stimulation to express themselves. Instruction must begin with the acceptance of the child and the language patterns brought to school. Variations in the quality and quantity of language development and background of experiences throughout the school years should be recognized and accepted. Such diversification should serve as a springboard for planning and implementing a language arts curriculum that reflects the nature and needs of children and the society in which they live. Because children vary in their background, learning potential, and educational opportunities, the sequence of language instruction is one of personalized and individualized goals rather than grade level expectations. Such goals should be designed to stimulate each child's level of understanding and development.

Basic Assumptions of the Curriculum

A number of basic principles for building a language arts curriculum are implicit in the foregoing philosophical statement. The list given here serves only as an introduction and guide to the many criteria that should influence the decision-making tasks involved in planning programs.

Learners and Learning

1. Children have a right to their own language--to the dialect that expresses their family and community identity and to the idiolect that expresses their unique personal identity.
2. Teachers should accept and utilize children's language patterns as springboards for instruction, accepting the responsibility to help all students develop their abilities to speak and write clearly and logically, whatever their dialects, and to provide opportunities for students to learn the conventions of what has been called "written edited American English."
3. Learning experiences should reflect sound principles of psychology and the developmental characteristics of children.
4. Recognition should be given to each child's best mode of learning (visual, auditory, tactile, etc.) in order to provide appropriate instruction and experiences.

5. Learning occurs as the result of an interaction of previous experiences, subject matter, teaching methodology, and instructional materials. The instructional program should reflect consideration of each of these elements.

Suggested Reading:

Fisher, C. J. and Terry, C. A. Children's Language and the Language Arts. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977.

Chapter 2, "Learning through Active Participation," and Chapter 14, "Integrating the Language Arts," are particularly pertinent to the above statements.

Hymes, D. "Introduction" In Cazden, C. B. and others, Functions of Language in the Classroom. New York:

Teachers College Press, 1972. The "Introduction" provides an insightful and sensitive overview of language use in real situations.

Content

1. Language instruction is most productive and meaningful when based upon the language and experiences of the learner.
2. The selection of subject matter should be determined by the interests and needs of the students, stages of growth and development, and abilities.
3. The goal of instruction should be the development of creative and competent producers and consumers of

language. This goal is best accomplished through emphasis upon the creative arts of English (language itself, literature, drama, and oral and written composition). The skills of language use (mechanics, usage, spelling, etc.) should be utilized as means to this goal.

Suggested Reading:

Allen, R. V. Language Experiences in Communication. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976. Presents a strong rationale for using the child's language and experiences as the basis for the curriculum.

Smith, E. Brooks and others. Language and Thinking in School. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976. Presents the language curriculum in terms of language itself, thinking, and the learner. Teaching suggestions are based upon knowledge of the learner and the learner's language.

Teaching Methodology

1. The student should be an active participant who shares in the responsibility for planning and implementing learning activities.
2. Student or problem-centered approaches should be utilized whenever appropriate.
3. The role of the teacher is that of a facilitator of

learning experiences. The teacher should motivate and guide student activities.

4. Teachers should use a variety of resources (films, field trips, records and tapes, magazines and newspapers, guest speakers, etc.) to supplement classroom activities. Discussion, literature, creative writing and drama should be the content of the language arts program. Textbooks should be used as resource handbooks for skill development and reference.
5. Teaching methods and approaches need to be closely aligned with current insights, research, and major ideas from linguistics, psychology, sociology, and education.

Suggested Reading:

All of the following offer excellent pedagogical suggestions.

Croft, D. J. and Hess, R. D. An Activities Handbook for Teachers of Young Children. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980.

Donoghue, M. R. The Child and the English Language Arts. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1979.

Flanigan, M. C. and Boone, Robert S. Using Media in the Language Arts: A Source Book. Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock, 1977.

Moffett, J. and Wagner, B. J. Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13; A Handbook for Teachers. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976.

Petty, W. T. and Jensen, J. M. Developing Children's Language. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980.

Evaluation

1. Evaluation should include a variety of procedures: observations, checklists, teacher-made tests, criterion-referenced tests, samples of work, etc.
2. Evaluation should always be based upon the goals and objectives to be accomplished.
3. Evaluative procedures must be differentiated according to the nature of the learning experiences. Whereas attention to skills may be necessary in practical or functional situations, content and ideas are more important than mechanics in creative activities.

Suggested Reading:

Burns, P. C. Assessment and Correction of Language Arts Difficulties. Columbus: C. E. Merrill, 1980. Provides numerous suggestions and resources for the evaluation of language arts. Discusses informal and formal procedures for evaluation.

Note

These guidelines were developed cooperatively by a committee of teachers and principals from the Columbus, Ohio Public Schools. The suggestions made by the committee were the basis for this language arts philosophy and the Elementary Language Arts Staff Development Program coordinated by James S. Sims, Supervisor of English Language Arts, and Marilyn K. Parker, Resource Teacher and Richard G. Kolczynski, Language Arts Consultant.